DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 314 541 UD 027 221

TITLE	The Newest Americans: Report of the American Jewish Committee's Task Force on the Acculturation of Immigrants to American Life.
INSTITUTION	American Jewish Committee, New York, N.Y.
SPONS AGENCY	Sanford C. Bernstein and Co. Foundation, Inc.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-87495-089-9
PUB DATE	87
NOTE	38p.
PUB TYPE	Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Acculturation; Adjustment (to Environment); *Cultural Pluralism; *Economic Factors; Government Role; *Immigrants; *Multicultural Education; Outcomes of Education; Private Agencies; *Social Influences; Social Problems

ABSTRACT

Large and continuing immigration will create problems for the American social and economic systems. The influx will require significant policy initiatives in both the public and private sectors, but the country is more than capable of solving these problems and, in the process, will receive many benefits. The following problems are discussed: (1) immigrants are entering an already-strained economy; (2) many older Americans fear that immigrants' allegiance to their native language constitutes a threat to national unity; and (3) some taxpayers fear that immigrants consume costly social services in excess of their contributions in taxes. However, a tradition of openness to newcomers and acceptance of a unifying civic authority, and recent political and societal changes, such as increased acceptance of cultural diversity, contribute to the immigrants' speedy and positive acculturation. Immigrants are also assisted by voluntary agencies and government programs, new jobs and opportunities, and the efforts of the educational system to understand and promote pluralism and cultural diversity in both formal education and extracurricular activities. The comments of five members of the American Jewish Committee's Task Force on the Acculturation of Immigrants to American Life and a list of the Task Force's members are appended. (FMW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED314541

THE NEWEST AMERICANS

REPORT OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE'S TASK FORCE ON THE ACCULTURATION OF IMMIGRANTS TO AMERICAN LIFE

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Gary Rubin
American Jewish Committee

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

UD 027 221

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE, Institute of Human Relations, 165 East 56 Street, New York, NY 10022-2746

THE NEWEST AMERICANS

REPORT OF THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE'S TASK FORCE ON THE ACCULTURATION OF IMMIGRANTS TO AMERICAN LIFE

George M. Szabad, Chair
Gary E. Rubin, Director

Publication and distribution of this document was made possible in part by a grant from the Sanford C. Bernstein and Co. Foundation, Inc.

Copyright © 1987 The American Jewish Committee
All rights reserved

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number 87-70998
ISBN 0-87495-089-9

CONTENTS

Foreword	v
Introduction	1
Acculturation and the American Economy	4
Intergroup Relations and Acculturation	10
Acculturation and the Language Issue	14
Identity Development and Service Provision	18
Summary	22
Appendix: Comments of Task Force Members	24
The American Jewish Committee's Task Force on the Acculturation of Immigrants to American Life	29

FOREWORD

Until very recently, specialists in immigration focused primarily on entry policy -- that is, which newcomers and how many should be admitted to the United States each year. Concern with this issue culminated in the passage of comprehensive immigration legislation in 1986, which significantly altered the definitions and regulations governing the entry of newcomers.

But debates about entry policy have a serious limitation: they focus on issues that are decided at the border. Yet immigrants have a widespread impact on the entire society. They affect the economy, social life, intergroup relations, and values of their new homeland. That is why immigration specialists are increasingly turning to the study of acculturation, the process by which newcomers adapt to -- and help shape -- American society. In this process, the immigrant's culture and the American culture come into contact and influence each other, with neither disappearing in the encounter.

The focus on acculturation rejects as inadequate three previous ways of describing the relation between immigrants and their new homeland. The notions that newcomers acquire "Anglo-conformity" by adjusting to an English-based cultural system, lose their identities in a "melting pot" of various nationalities, or "assimilate" fully into a mainstream all underestimate the reciprocal impact that immigrants and older Americans have on each other. Understanding and responding to this interchange is one of the most urgent challenges facing policy-makers today.

To further both understanding and policy debate on acculturation, the American Jewish Committee convened a task force that considered this issue through most of 1986. Its membership consisted of leading scholars, agency directors, lawyers, ethnic group representatives, community-relations professionals and policy analysts on immigration. This paper reflects their deliberations, though the AJC is primarily responsible for its content and recommendations. All members of the task force had an opportunity to comment on this report, and many of

their remarks appear in the appendix. None is necessarily identified with any conclusion or point of analysis.

Dealing with the relationship between immigrants and American society, acculturation is potentially an inexhaustible topic. The process of adaptation occurs over several years, even generations, and encompasses economic, social, intergroup, educational and psychological factors. To retain a manageable perspective, the task force focused on the experiences of recent immigrants during the first few years of their encounters with American society. We hope our deliberations will stimulate new thinking and action, in both the public and private sectors, on the acculturation process.

George M. Szabad, Chair
Gary E. Rubin, Director
AJC Center on Immigration and
Acculturation

INTRODUCTION

Two major conclusions flow from the data and analysis contained in this report. First, large and continuing immigration will create problems for the American social and economic systems that will require significant policy initiatives in both the public and private sectors. Second, the country is more than capable of overcoming these problems, and in the process will receive many benefits that newcomers bring to it.

Immigration to the United States is not an isolated phenomenon. Large-scale migrations occur all over the world today as people seek greater opportunity, freedom, or personal goals.

The communications revolution has spread knowledge about the United States around the globe. American TV programs, products, and cultural values now penetrate the remotest societies. People everywhere become exposed to the attractions of American life and can take advantage of relatively inexpensive transportation to get here.

Greater ease of movement has been matched by changes in American law that permit immigration from regions of the world where it was formerly discouraged. Before 1965, U.S. policy consciously favored immigrants from Europe and the Western Hemisphere and virtually barred those from other Third World countries. In the past two decades, this situation has changed dramatically. National-origin quotas have been struck from our immigration laws, causing a dramatic change in the composition of immigration. Now only slightly over a tenth of immigrants come from Europe; more than 80 percent come from Asia and Latin America, and a small but rising proportion originates in Africa. The United States is becoming, in the words of Ben Wattenberg, the "first universal nation."

Immigration has increased not only in diversity but also in numbers. In the 1980s, the country has averaged close to 600,000 new legal entries every year. Others, in undetermined but certainly significant numbers, come in illegally. Legislative efforts to reduce

the legal flow have been consistently defeated, while new measures to curtail illegal immigration have not yet proved their effectiveness. For the foreseeable future, the country will continue to experience large-scale and diverse immigration.

Immigration will continue to have a significant impact on every part of our national life. In the aggregate, that impact will be positive. However, we can move now to adopt constructive policies to enhance the benefits of the new immigration.

In the short run, several problems must be squarely acknowledged and confronted.

Most important, immigrants enter an economy already experiencing serious strains. American businesses are facing productivity problems, foreign competition, high levels of unemployment and underemployment, and particular difficulty absorbing minority workers. Immigrants contribute many economic benefits, including some that redress current national weaknesses, but their impact on the job market, particularly as it affects minority workers, needs to be evaluated and, if necessary, addressed by new policy approaches.

Newcomers also affect volatile intergroup relations. As long as employment, housing, and quality education remain relatively scarce, different groups will contend with each other for them. It remains to be seen to what degree immigrants will join in coalitions to expand the availability of social goods or compete for the limited supply.

Language and social services are other problem areas. Newcomers add to the national stock of linguistically competent Americans, but many older Americans fear that the immigrants' allegiance to their native tongues threatens national unity. And some taxpayers fear that immigrants consume costly social services in excess of their contributions in taxes.

This report does not deny the reality of these problems, but it argues that the country has sufficient resources to cope with them, especially since most experts agree that the benefits newcomers bring with them far outweigh the costs. Moreover, it points out that powerful forces within American society contribute to the immigrants' positive and speedy acculturation.

First, openness to newcomers is characteristic of this country. From its beginning, America has defined itself as a pluralistic society, though it has never been without vocal nativist elements. Diverse groups could thrive here in freedom and still, in cooperation with each other, build a strong nation. At first, this diversity was basically religious. Increasingly it also became racial and ethnic. In the past, America's pluralism has proved a source of strength rather than of weakness. There is no reason to believe that the new immigrants will

fail to contribute positively, in their varied ways, to the national character and wealth.

Pluralism works only if all groups remain committed to the concept of a single national identity. While in other countries this cohesive identity has been cultural, in the United States it is civic. Many cultures thrive here because they share a common civic commitment to the nation and its government. It is this acceptance of a unifying civic authority that makes possible the acculturation of new immigrants to the American polity.

Second, the current immigration coincides with political and societal changes that, on balance, make acculturation more feasible than in previous periods in American history. Some of these changes make acculturation more difficult. These include the illegal status of many newcomers, severe deficiencies in educational systems in cities to which they come, and growing conflicts over intergroup issues such as affirmative action.

But other changes facilitate the process of acculturation, allowing newcomers both to integrate into mainstream society and to influence the culture of the United States. Americans are more accepting now of the concept of ethnic and cultural diversity than they have been in the past. The increasing commitment to pluralism both makes reception of newcomers smoother and allows them to feel that they have a rightful place within American society. The civil rights revolution of the past two decades has created a moral and legal framework for integration into the mainstream. Private voluntary agencies and government programs have been developed specifically to help immigrants to adjust. The economy has created new jobs and opportunities to speed their absorption. Finally, the educational system, from elementary school to college, has begun to understand the challenge of pluralism and to promote the idea of diversity in both formal instruction and extracurricular activities.

These trends will help the acculturation process, but they will not render it problem free. Serious challenges remain in economic integration, intergroup relations, education, language acquisition, and service utilization. Each of these issues requires intense policy analysis and development. Immigrants will acculturate to our society and benefit it significantly, but the process will be smoother if we adopt some of the policies suggested in this report.

ACCULTURATION AND THE AMERICAN ECONOMY

Most of the controversy that surrounds immigration centers on its impact on the economy, particularly the job market. Yet, for all the attention this topic receives, public discussion remains confused. The fact is that immigration has some problematic effects on the U.S. economy, but these are outweighed by clear gains.

The overall impact of immigration on the economy can be stated with some assurance: In the aggregate and over time, newcomers contribute significantly to economic growth and vitality. In the short term, there may be costs associated with their entry. Refugees, admitted under special conditions, may require a period of resettlement when support and training programs will have to be provided for them. The willingness of many immigrants to work long hours for low wages may depress conditions in certain industries and cause some displacement of American workers, particularly among minorities and the young. But these negative impacts should not obscure the economic benefits that newcomers bring. They fill undesirable jobs, create new oportunities and businesses, and add to the nation's wealth and resources. A rational policy would seek to maximize the benefits they bring while minimizing their negative effects.

Many employers have traditionally sought newcomers as key components of their work forces. Some, such as growers or clothes manufacturers, consistently recruit from certain immigrant groups because of their profitable experience with them. Labor unions, which used to oppose large-scale immigration, have dropped their advocacy of restriction and have begun to draw increasing numbers of newcomers into their ranks. Some, such as the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, have lobbied actively for a generous immigration policy. In recent years, the AFL-CIO has come to support immigration.

The high productivity of immigrant labor has lowered costs for some American businesses, allowing them to survive -- and thus preserve jobs -- in highly competitive industries. Moreover, the immigrants' productivity has forced other workers to match them. In many ways, the

economic problems immigrants cause, which will be discussed below, flow from their positive qualities.

Immigrants must be especially ambitious and venturesome people to risk leaving their homes to seek a better life in a new country. Many possess skills and educations superior to the norms in their countries of origin. These qualities and skills, plus their adaptability and diligence, make immigrants valuable additions to the American work force.

Moreover, immigrants make a commitment to stay in the United States and build their futures here. Recent studies indicate that even illegal aliens in large cities tend to remain in this country for extended periods and make long-term commitments to the work force. Even if economic conditions in the United States should worsen, the U.S. economy would still offer more attractive options than the economies of the immigrants' countries of origin.

While helped by an economy open to enterprise and effort, immigrants themselves often generate the resources necessary for their advancement. They draw not only on their own savings but also on those of their ethnic communities. In many cases, small businesses attain necessary capital through the pooling of resources of ethnic banks, rotating credit organizations, and informal contacts. Customers from the community provide the initial market from which enterprises then expand. These shops and service establishments often supply the early training and financial base for the launching of children into business or professional careers.

Immigrants contribute to the U.S. economy in another way: as links to the markets of their home countries. The Hispanic community of Miami, for example, has played a key role in making that city a major center for trade with Latin America. West Coast enterprises use the connections of newly arrived Asians to enhance contacts with nations in the Far East.

It would be wrong, however, to conceive of immigrants' adaptation to the U.S. economy as simple or smooth. Their efforts to fit into the work force or create businesses have resulted in real difficulties, both for themselves and for other Americans. It is important to understand these problems and to devise responses to them.

In the first place, immigrants often take places in the economy that no one else will accept. Work characterized by drudgery or tedium, such as garment manufacture or agricultural field labor, fails to attract anyone but people desperate for jobs. Similarly, newcomers with little capital and insufficient training for jobs in large corporations often start small businesses, taking risks that native Americans avoid. When they succeed, it is often by dint of very long hours and hard work.

Newcomers also face the problem of discrimination. This affects their chances at every level of the economy. Laborers have difficulty

in securing semiskilled and skilled jobs, small businesses and professionals must struggle to attract mainstream clienteles, and the highly educated find themselves excluded from the executive suite.

The economic impact of immigration must be measured not only by the experiences of newcomers themselves but also by the experiences of other groups in American society. That impact is not uniform throughout the work force or society as a whole. It affects different groups in different ways.

Immigrants generally benefit consumers and the upper and middle classes. They stimulate growth by adding to the work force, and their productivity lowers prices for goods and services. Their hard work helps maintain businesses owned and managed by successful Americans.

Their effect on more marginal groups such as Blacks, women, and teenagers is more complex. To some extent, newcomers compete with these groups for jobs at the lower end of the occupational scale and for small-business opportunities. Sometimes, they will tolerate wages or working conditions that groups accustomed to American standards find unacceptable. While they aid economic growth, they may skew the distribution of economic benefits.

Moreover, their very abilities and productivity may cause them to fill necessary economic roles for only a relatively short time. By successfully filling special niches in work-intensive industries or in small business, they frequently accumulate the skills and capital needed to move up the occupational ladder. In doing so, they advance beyond performing the low-end or high-risk economic roles in which they made their original contributions to the economy.

Still, the impact of immigrants on the life chances or opportunities of other groups should not be exaggerated. Much of the concern about the displacement of American workers arose out of the difficult employment experiences of Black, female, and young workers in the early 1980s. But this was a period of economic stringency for the nation as a whole. While immigration was high in those years, it was not the only factor creating a tight job market. Policy in Washington focused on fighting inflation rather than expanding the work force. Large, high-paying smokestack industries gave way to small, low-paying high-tech or service industries. High interest rates limited new initiatives. While it would be foolish to ignore immigration as an economic factor, it would also be inaccurate to overestimate its importance. If immigration were suddenly halted, the employment problems of other groups would not vanish.

In evaluating immigrants' impact on the job prospects of American minorities, we must avoid what economists call the "lump of labor" fallacy. This holds that the U.S. economy is capable of providing only a limited number of jobs and therefore that any job taken by an immigrant is one less for native-born Americans. On the contrary,

employment opportunity is dynamic: in a vital economy, the supply of jobs expands. Between 1950 and 1980, for example, 24 million women joined the work force, yet at the same time male employment increased by 14 million. New workers add to national dynamism and growth, creating new jobs for others.

Other social and economic trends present problems for immigrant workers. Many immigrants have to take positions that pay close to poverty-level wages, offer little security, and force them at times to rely on welfare. Some ethnic communities with strong family traditions have recently experienced an increase in single-parent families and the threat of a growing underclass. A real danger exists that acculturation among a sizable number of newcomers could take place not to the more successful sectors of American society but to those at the lower ends of the social and occupational scales.

Positive traits that help immigrants advance can have negative side effects. Cultural traditions that value individual drive and accomplishment enhance newcomers' initiative but make it difficult to organize them in labor unions or political activities. Immigrants from countries where black markets or other illicit economic activities are accepted have a difficult time adjusting to American regulations, taxes, and business practices.

Perhaps the greatest psychological problem for many immigrants is the tremendous pressure they feel to succeed. Americans judge them by their economic accomplishments, and they often hold themselves to very high standards. High levels of stress frequently accompany immigrants' drive to achieve status and security in the United States.

Some analysts, in assessing the economic problems associated with immigration, have concluded that its cost is too great and that we should restrict entry in order to protect the job market, prevent competition, save resources, and aid American-born workers. These recommendations are shortsighted and counterproductive, for three reasons.

First, for all of the negative economic effects of immigration, the economic impact on balance is clearly positive. Immigration enhances the national wealth of the United States. Curtailing it would not produce a sudden spurt of employment among the currently jobless. It would only deny the nation the real benefits it now receives from new infusions of human resources.

Second, immigration is a national policy issue, while many of the economic problems associated with it are regional or sectoral. Congress enacts a single immigration law based on national interests and principles. It would require a sophistication beyond the capacity of Congress to create a legal framework that would affect different classes, groups, sectors, or regions differentially. Immigration policy must respond to national trends, and these, in general, are positive.

Third, immigration policy should not reflect purely economic interests in any case. Our current laws give priority to refugee rescue and family reunification in deciding who shall be admitted. These concerns hold independent of their economic consequences. Obviously, the impact of immigration on job markets and businesses must be taken into account in devising policy, but not to the exclusion of the humanitarian concerns that have shaped our present statutes.

Still, arguing that economic considerations should not determine how many immigrants we admit does not mean that studies of the economics of acculturation have no policy consequences. The following policy recommendations could, if adopted, facilitate newcomers' adaptation to the American economy:

- Mainstream financial institutions should recognize immigrant economic dynamism and do more to encourage it. Currently, many enterprises started by newcomers must depend for capitalization on family or community resources. Government or resettlement agencies may provide advice or training but not venture capital. Lending institutions should recognize the strong record of immigrant businesses and make loans to them on the same basis as they do to others.

- The conditions of immigrant economic success should be better understood and supported. Many newcomer enterprises depend on residential concentrations of their ethnic group to provide consumers and workers. Concentrations of newcomers should thus be seen not as obstacles to the immigrants' economic integration but as conditions for the success of their enterprises.

- Discrimination impedes immigrant economic mobility through denial of jobs, loans, or customers. Civil rights and anti-discrimination efforts must focus on problems encountered by immigrants in their economic adaptation.

- Special efforts should be made to initiate dialogues between immigrant and minority groups on economic issues and to develop cooperative projects.

- Private agency job programs for refugees and other immigrants too often train for certain kinds of jobs regardless of demand. Such programs should adjust to meet the changing job market.

- Job training and placement programs for immigrants should not be segregated from those for the general population. Placements will be more efficient when agencies pool their information and resources.

- Accurate information in this area remains a key need, including both technical data to aid placement professionals and general

information to inform the public about immigrant economic adaptation.

Immigrants generally do well in the American economy and contribute to its vitality. Still, policies can be adopted that will enhance their positive impacts on the economy and minimize the negative effects. The economic consequences of immigration will continue to generate much study and be a key concern of future policy initiatives.

INTERGROUP RELATIONS AND ACCULTURATION

Among the features of American life to which immigrants must adjust is its pluralistic social system. Immigrants enter a country that prides itself on diversity but has also experienced tensions among its ethnic communities. They must define their relations with others and find places within the complex social system of their new country.

Two factors draw immigrants into group affairs in the United States. First, the particular ethnic and -- in the case of recent newcomers -- racial identities of these groups create expectations that, like other communities, they will play a distinct role in American pluralistic life. Second, the American penchant for administrative categorization demands that they be seen in a group context, no matter what their actual histories in the old country. Asians, for example, are made up of over 20 different groups, some of which have centuries-long traditions of violent conflict with each other. Members of the Hispanic community comprise a wide variety of heritages, economic experiences, dialects and national histories. Yet in the United States these groups are combined into the overall administrative categories of "Asian" and "Hispanic" and are understood as single entities by the general public, affirmative-action officers, political strategists and other key functionaries in American society. This forging of ethnic identity creates the necessity for both development of leadership and communal agendas within groups and the building of constructive external relations across ethnic communities.

The most immediate intergroup-relations problem faced by newcomers is discrimination. At times, discrimination is overt: immigrant minorities find themselves shut out of jobs, quality schools, housing, public services and other vital opportunities. At least as often, prejudice appears in more subtle ways. Asian-Americans, for example, charge that the schools direct their children into scientific and technical programs rather than the humanities and arts. Hispanics claim that their children are steered away from high-achievement tracks into vocational or general programs. These decisions result not so much from

conscious bigotry on the part of school administrators as from the influence of broad cultural stereotypes.

Such prejudice and discrimination need to be combated vigorously. Courts and administrative agencies should assure compliance with equal-opportunity statutes, legislators should mandate strong action against unfair practices, and educational campaigns should be mounted against bigotry. Immigrants, like other vulnerable groups, should be guaranteed freedom of opportunity.

More controversial is whether immigrants should be included in affirmative-action plans that move beyond protection against discrimination to require positive action to bring minorities into valued employment and educational positions. Proponents argue that newcomers should receive no less protection against discrimination than anyone else; if they are wronged, they should enjoy the same affirmative-action redress as other aggrieved groups. Opponents counter that affirmative action has legitimate application only to U.S.-born Blacks, since it was designed specifically to redress wrongs suffered by this group over many generations. Immigrants, unlike the slave ancestors of the present Black population, come to the United States and enter its job market voluntarily; they are entitled -- in this view -- to equal opportunity but not to compensatory benefits.

An emerging problem is prejudice by immigrants against American minorities. Some newcomers who have achieved success here look with contempt upon other groups who have not matched their mobility. Some practice discrimination in hiring in their businesses, especially against Blacks. The same legal, educational, and enforcement strategies now in place to protect immigrants and other groups should be employed to prevent newcomers from practicing job or other types of discrimination and to instill an appreciation of the ideals of pluralism.

In addition to experiencing anti-immigrant discrimination, newcomers have encountered incidents of intergroup conflict that at times have escalated into violence. Confrontations have occurred over housing, jobs, schools, language, crime, ownership of businesses, access to services, and relations with police. These problems are especially acute where newcomers have concentrated in neighborhoods near other ethnic groups.

Such incidents require multifaceted responses. Law-enforcement agencies must be firm with perpetrators of violence. Signs of impending danger must be recognized and, where possible, hostilities averted. A real sense of social order must govern relations among ethnic groups.

Beyond responding to overt violence, positive actions must be undertaken to prevent conflict. Programs in police-community relations, interethnic understanding, and civic participation must be initiated by schools and neighborhood associations in areas where tensions are high.

Private arbitration societies or public agencies such as the Justice Department's Community Relations Service can provide needed training and consultation for such efforts.

It would be naive to suggest that conflicts can be eliminated from community life. But skillful interventions can help. People will always compete for jobs, living space, and status. These are conflicts of interest, and they can be rationally negotiated. More dangerous are conflicts of race and culture. These grow out of deep, unconscious hostilities. Because they are irrational, they are difficult to defuse. Community tension-reduction programs can help to turn conflicts of race and culture into conflicts of interest over which groups can contend in a reasonable manner.

Tension-reduction programs should not be limited to the groups immediately involved in a conflict situation. The entire community must be reached. Here the media play key roles by interpreting events and even instigating further developments -- for better or worse. Sometimes media attention may actually exacerbate a conflict. Once the media are involved, mediators should provide them with accurate data and unbiased perspectives. Public education on intergroup conflicts -- including conflicts involving immigrants -- is crucial to their long-term resolution.

Indispensable for improving intergroup relations is the development of indigenous leadership within the immigrant community itself. Genuine communal action cannot be inspired or directed by outsiders. To be effective in dealing with other ethnic groups, immigrants must generate their own leaders and spokespersons. Indeed, they have a right to leadership of their own choosing. Once these leaders have been selected, by whatever process is customary in that community, they should be accepted as peers by leaders of other groups.

In addition to developing their own leadership, immigrant groups must learn to understand and function within the framework of American democratic values and pluralism. Many come from homogeneous societies that have little conception or tradition of peaceful conflict resolution. American pluralism is a unique concept to which newcomers will gradually adjust. They must learn to represent their own interests in continual negotiation with other groups.

Finally, immigrants will relate on equal terms with others only when they become recognized as full participants in American society. This will happen when substantial numbers become citizens and join fully in the public life of the community, city, state, and country. There they will learn how to ally with other groups in coalitions on key issues affecting them and the society at large, thereby empowering themselves as all other groups have done. In this way only will immigrant groups be fully integrated into the American mainstream.

To recapitulate briefly the Task Force's recommendations on acculturation and intergroup relations:

- Prejudice reduction is a key need on both sides of the American-immigrant encounter. Bias against newcomers in jobs, housing and politics needs to be vigorously combatted, as do emerging negative immigrant attitudes toward American minorities.

- Community conflicts involving immigrants need to be resolved and violence avoided through coordinated public and private tension-reduction programs, community-relations training, and constructive use of the media.

- Immigrant communities must be represented in their public activities by indigenous communal leaders, not outsiders purporting to speak for them. Training for community leadership is a key need.

- Formal and informal programs need to be mounted to teach the concepts of democratic values and pluralism to newcomers, who often come from places where these ideals are absent from public life.

- Citizenship programs which put newcomers on an equal civic and political footing with other Americans should be developed for immigrants resident in the United States longer than five years.

- To realize full integration, public-issue coalitions should seek participation by immigrant organizations on issues that go beyond entry policy or language that are of particular interest to newcomers. Their involvement should be encouraged on the full range of issues critical to the functioning of American society.

ACCULTURATION AND THE LANGUAGE ISSUE

No issue affecting acculturation is as controversial as language. The languages people speak are principal determinants of their identities and self-perceptions. When immigrants are unable to communicate in English, some Americans fear that the immigrants' feelings, allegiances and life-styles will be as different from those of the mainstream as their languages. More than any acculturation issue, this one requires sensitive understanding and intellectual rigor.

For all the controversy sparked by the language issue, there exists a surprising amount of agreement on the goals of a national language policy. All sides concur that universal English literacy is an urgent national priority. Wide support also exists for enhancing the capacity of Americans to speak other languages. The controversy centers on ways to achieve these goals; consensus on aims has not translated into agreement on policy.

To understand the language issue, it is necessary to distinguish three separate areas of concern: education, civil rights, and national language policy. All are interrelated, but each requires analysis in its own right.

For most of this century, American educators believed they had a clear mission where immigrants were concerned: to assimilate their foreign-born students to mainstream educational and cultural norms. In the last two decades, the shortcomings of this approach have become evident. It depreciates the students' ethnic identities and impoverishes the classroom by excluding the valuable contributions of home cultures. In education as in other sectors of our society, assimilation has waned as a goal. Educators are now addressing the much more complex task of instilling respect for pluralism while still promoting allegiance to national ideals. The diverse cultural heritages of students as well as their identity as Americans now find expression in both classroom and extracurricular activities.

Like any major change, the reorientation of educational goals from

assimilation to pluralism has engendered controversy, much of it reflected in debates on bilingual education. These concern the goals of language teaching, the staffing patterns of schools, and budget priorities of educational systems. Perhaps most basic is the question of whether bilingual education is capable of fulfilling its objective of teaching two languages simultaneously.

Bilingual education as a strategy for teaching English while using the students' primary language for instruction in other subjects has gotten mixed reviews. A few recent studies indicate some success in programs that enjoyed adequate funding, competent staff and the support of school administrators. In fact, some investigators have found that students learn better in "slow track" bilingual programs that build linguistic skills gradually than in "fast track" classes. None of these studies is conclusive, however, and more research is needed.

Sharp battle lines have been drawn in the debate over the future of bilingual education. Recent recommendations of the U.S. Department of Education suggest that bilingual programs be used only for recent immigrants or youngsters with very poor English skills and that they move students into English-language classes as soon as possible. Proponents of bilingual education argue that it can enhance education, should be accessible to all children who could benefit from it, and needs more funding and support, not less. They call for federal assistance to ensure adequate budgets, scholarly research and reasonable goals for bilingual education.

Policy in this area needs to be developed quickly, for the situation of non-English-speaking students is worsening. Spanish speakers in particular underperform in school compared to any other large group. They often receive little help from their parents or other close relatives since many Hispanic adults are illiterate in English. Even if it were desirable, integration in schools with English speakers is often impossible since many Hispanic children live in school districts with heavy concentrations of foreign-language speakers. Bilingual programs designed for these children often fail to meet even minimal standards. They lack trained teachers and adequate facilities, and they have been used by unscrupulous administrators to bust teachers' unions. Clearly, vast improvement is needed in bilingual programs. Policy cannot rest content with establishing them; it must also demand higher levels of performance than is now the norm.

It is important to emphasize that newcomers want to learn English and certainly want their children to learn it. Of course, older immigrants also want to retain their native tongues because those are the vehicles for passing on their traditions and values to their children and grandchildren. But except for a small group of cultural isolationists, newcomers recognize that English is necessary to succeed in the United States, and they ardently desire success for their families. Contrary to popular stereotypes, resistance to English hardly exists in the Hispanic or Asian community. But acquiring English is

difficult. Indeed, it is one of the hardest of all languages to master. We must find effective ways to help newcomers learn English, not criticize them for not learning it fast enough.

Language is also a civil-rights issue. The Supreme Court decision in the Lau case held that schools must make special efforts to instruct students who have not mastered English. Bilingual education is one, though not the sole, method of fulfilling this requirement. In like manner, access to full participation in American society has necessitated bilingual ballots and other public documents in areas of heavy concentration of foreign-language speakers. Language cannot be a barrier to the enjoyment of full rights in the United States.

But issues of education and civil rights do not exhaust the larger issue of language policy. Should we aim to use public resources only to teach English to all or should we also, as a matter of policy, seek to enhance the capacity of all Americans to speak other languages?

The rationale for improving the language proficiency of Americans is the increasing interdependence of the nations of the world in every area of human concern. If we are going to participate in these common pursuits we need to communicate with other peoples in their own languages.

The United States is now seriously handicapped in its international relations because of Americans' widely criticized inability to speak other languages. Many Europeans speak several languages, one of them usually English. The number of Japanese businessmen able to transact business in English vastly exceeds the number of American businessmen who can function in Japanese. Of course, some people minimize the problem. English, they note, is increasingly becoming the preferred international language for commerce, diplomacy and other activities, and it would be to the advantage of the United States to encourage this trend. But language is more than a vehicle for utilitarian communication. It is the key to understanding other people's thought and cultures. Without this understanding we cannot comprehend the world we live in.

How can the country move toward a comprehensive policy aimed to meet the nation's urgent need for language proficiency? First, the terms of the current discussion of this issue will have to change. Language policy will not move forward if it is trapped in a debate between Hispanic organizations and other ethnic groups on one side and defenders of English, including some prominent ethnic voices, on the other.

Nor is the current coalition of bilingual-education advocates, ethnic-group defenders, language instructors and civil-rights champions adequate to generate the political support needed for language programs. The advocacy coalition for language programs must be broadened. The business sector must articulate its need for a linguistically competent

work force. So must leaders in government, science, engineering, scholarship, the arts, journalism and other fields that need linguistically competent professionals.

This coalition must seek a rational dialogue about language that transcends the polarized atmosphere in which this topic is currently debated. Language has become a political issue. Increasingly, electoral referenda seek to bar the use of foreign languages on ballots, on street signs, or in the business of public agencies. These initiatives have been spearheaded by a small group of activists, many of whom seek to use the language issue to stir up nativist sentiment and support for immigration restriction. But they have often attracted the support of voters who do not share the activists' xenophobia. More emphasis is needed in public discussions on the real issues at stake: the interests of the country in fostering linguistic competence, constructive methods to assure universal English literacy, and the value and meaning of pluralism. These positions will be advanced not by divisive referenda but by constructive initiatives seeking competency in both English and other languages.

While forging a constructive language policy will not be easy, the following recommendations would contribute to progress on this issue:

- English competency programs should receive strong support both for students in schools and for adults through community-based instructional programs.

- Bilingual programs that are competently run and adequately supported should be avaliable for students who need them to maintain their educational level while they learn English.

- No school program or government agency should do anything to denigrate home languages, which are often key factors in community and family cohesion among immigrants.

- Educational programs, as a matter of national interest, should seek to foster language proficiency among all Americans by stressing foreign-language education.

- Public agencies, especially on matters affecting safety, such as street signs, or affecting civic participation, such as ballots, should provide services in languages that large communities of residents can understand.

- Civic and communal leadership should work publicly to foster rational discourse on language policy and discourage exploitation of this issue that produces ethnic discord and communal tensions.

IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT AND SERVICE PROVISION IN THE IMMIGRANT COMMUNITY

Acculturation requires shifts in self-concept, in relations to others, and in connections to social groupings. The process has important implications for the immigrants, their community, and the social services intended for them.

Like any major transition, acculturation entails major loss. Even refugees who flee oppressive regimes will miss familiar surroundings, relatives, and social norms. On arrival in the United States, they must adjust to novel modes of behavior and interaction -- indeed, to a novel world view. The outcome of such a major adjustment is determined both by themselves and by the receiving society.

Whatever immigrants leave behind, they retain an identity that connects them to their ethnic group in the United States. This tie often confuses, but it also contributes to the formation of a new sense of self in the new land. It provides a center around which other changes occur.

Recent research has demonstrated that successful identity formation requires acceptance of one's ethnic identity and culture. Ambivalence toward one's background produces inner tension, while acceptance of ethnicity provides rootedness and self-assurance. Family cohesion is also enhanced by shared appreciation of ties to community and history. While becoming Americans, newcomers must learn to integrate their ethnicity within a pluralistic society.

Several factors affect the process of coming to grips with American life. The individual's ambivalence is one factor, as it is in every major change. The difficulty of understanding American society, of knowing exactly what one should adjust to, is another problem. Whether a person left the home country voluntarily or under duress will have an impact on his or her adaptation to the new situation. So will the type of reception -- warm and accepting or cold and distant -- offered by the ethnic community in the United States. The degree of knowledge about

conditions and life-styles in the new society will affect the speed of adjustment. Finally, the reaction of the mainstream population will influence the atmosphere in which acculturation takes place.

Key to mitigating the problems of adaptation is the ethnic community. It serves as a conservator of former life-styles, as a place where immigrants can learn about their new surroundings from people who have already gone through the transition on which they are now embarking, and as a place where experiences with new circumstances can be shared and discussed with others like themselves. Ethnic enclaves constitute buffers to the larger society and permit a gradual introduction into it. Their continuing utility to new waves of newcomers is demonstrated by the fact that successive groups have established their own communities wherever they have settled. Public policies that misunderstood the social utility of those communities and attempted to break them up have inevitably failed.

The process of acculturation does not cease after the immigrant's first few months, or years, or even decades in the United States. It is a lifelong process of ethnic-identity formation and integration into American society. It extends to relations between parents and children. Indeed, recent studies have shown that ethnicity and relation to the larger society remain issues into the third, fourth, and even later generations.

To a certain extent, the processes of acculturation and identity formation will take place naturally. Left to themselves and family, ethnic and general contacts, immigrants will find jobs, adjust socially, and make new lives. Still, social-service agencies come into frequent contact with these groups and must understand the transition process in order to help them effectively. This applies to regular family service, community center, or vocational agencies that immigrants might contact and most particularly to the special social-service network established to aid refugees.

Social-service agencies must adjust their programs to the natural evolution of immigrants' lives. Immigrants have different needs at various points in their acculturation experience. No single model of service fits newcomers in all stages of their adaptation.

The immediate challenges facing immigrants upon entering the United States are the basic needs of housing, employment, and knowledge of their new surroundings. Frequently, solutions to these problems require provision of care for children and the elderly. Professional or skilled migrants might also require special programs to fit them into the American occupational system.

While housing and employment services can at times seem routine, they are still best done by professionals trained to work with newcomers. Mainstream service agencies often lack familiarity with the special needs of immigrants. In employment, for example, experience

shows that agencies sometimes cream the best prospects for intensive service and do less well with less-skilled or less-employable clients. The immigrants' particular needs are best understood by agencies specializing in resettlement or by personnel in mainstream agencies specially trained to work with immigrants. Some immigrants, for example, come from formal cultures and expect their counselor to sit behind a desk. Others are used to casual interactions and would be intimidated by such formality. Sensitivity to such issues is essential for success.

Once the initial resettlement tasks are performed, a transition period begins in which the immigrants and their communal institutions gradually take increasing responsibility. Ethnic mutual-aid societies perform social, occupational and community-building functions. Due to their rootedness in the community, they can undertake tasks that professional agencies cannot. Since leadership of these community groups may be new or inexperienced, mainstream agencies can play key roles in counseling and empowering. They frequently require technical assistance, office space, training in fund-raising or advice in dealing with public officials or the media. Professional service providers should see these ethnic societies as core client constituencies.

Mutual-aid societies are not without their problems, however. It would be naive to believe that such institutions universally achieve efficiency or effectiveness. Some make unsubstantiated claims to widespread support, and lack the capacity to handle budgets or carry out decisions. Discretion needs to be exercised on transferring responsibility to them.

Moreover, the cultural traditions of some immigrants prevent the formation of strong ethnic associations. Immigrants from totalitarian regimes may have become used to the state performing social and communal functions and resist taking responsibility for these activities themselves.

This makes the relationship of professionals to mutual-aid societies all the more important. To function in American society, immigrants must acquire organizational skills and assume communal responsibilities. Professional agencies will do their jobs well only if they develop immigrant organizational self-reliance while providing occupational, housing and other services.

Two other types of services providers affect the acculturation process. Large institutions such as hospitals and schools do not play direct roles in immigrant resettlement. But they serve sizable numbers of newcomers and must be sensitive to their special needs in the areas of health, education, and relations to authority. Both professional agencies and mutual-aid societies can play useful intermediary roles in these cases.

Second, the federal government plays a key role, especially through

its funding of refugee programs. In many cases, these programs are shaped through negotiations between federal funders and state welfare bureaucracies. At times, these agencies neglect to take immigrant needs and natural acculturation timelines into account. Bureaucratic considerations are important in mounting large-scale programs, but efforts to aid immigrants must be based on understanding of their special clientele.

Immigrants tend to be young, resourceful and adaptable. Even in difficult circumstances, they will find ways to adjust and contribute to their new society. But we should do all we can to understand the acculturation process and intervene to make it work better where that is possible.

Recommendations for dealing with newcomer populations include:

- Newcomers should be resettled in places where a community of their own background has been established so they can retain ethnic roots while learning about their new country. Rather than fearing these ethnic clusters, Americans should see them as buffers where newcomers begin the process of acculturation in a supportive environment.

- Social services for recently arrived immigrants are best provided by professionals familiar with the needs and cultures of their clients, whether in special resettlement agencies or in mainstream service agencies.

- Special training should be provided to professionals who work regularly with immigrants.

- Indigenous immigrant organizations need to be fostered to take over the task of acculturation and integration after the initial resettlement period. The transition from professional to indigenous services should be gradual, and mainstream agencies should work to assure the success and organizational competence of new immigrant associations.

- Large service institutions such as hospitals and federal agencies are especially prone to ignore the cultural needs of immigrant clients. Sensitivity to these needs requires particular effort and skill on the part of such agencies.

- More research is necessary on identity formation and transition and their implications for service provision.

SUMMARY

Immigration provides significant benefits for the United States, but we can still do much to facilitate the newcomers' adjustment to American society. The recommendations detailed at the end of each chapter of this report provide, in sum, a plan for easing acculturation problems and maximizing the positive impacts newcomers make on our national life.

Acculturation will continue as a key issue into the forseeable future. The size and diversity of the new immigration make attention to this topic inevitable. We can do much to influence current trends if we enhance our understanding of newcomers and improve our capacity to relate to them.

Immigrants make important contributions to the U.S. economy as workers, owners of businesses, consumers and talent resources. To some extent, they compete for jobs or wages with native-born Americans, especially at the low end of the economic scale. But their overall economic impact is clearly positive and could be even more so if we adopt policies to make capital more available to them, carry out vigorous antidiscrimination efforts, operate effective job-training programs, provide accurate information to the public on them and encourage dialogue and mutual understanding with American minorities on business issues.

Immigrants need to find their places within the pluralistic framework of American society. As they develop ethnic-group identities, they will find themselves both in conflict over scarce resources with other groups and in coalition with others to find solutions to their problems. Their intergroup adjustment can be advanced by prejudice-reduction programs, community-relations training, development of indigenous immigrant leadership, citizenship programs to put newcomers on an equal political and civic footing with other Americans and participation in broad-issue coalitions.

Language may be the most divisive issue raised by the new im-

migration. The educational, civil-rights and policy aspects of this issue raise complex problems, but a comprehensive strategy can be devised to handle them. This would include vigorous English-competency programs for students and adults, quality bilingual-education programs, bilingual public services on matters of public safety and civic participation, development of second-language capability for all Americans and a real effort by communal leadership to prevent exploitation of the language issue in ways that stir up community tensions.

Basic changes in identity and self-concept occur as newcomers adapt to American society. Services aimed to aid immigrants must make appropriate adjustments. They will be maximally effective if they are carried out by professionals especially trained to deal with newcomer clienteles and aid the immigrant community to develop its own indigenous leadership. Ethnic assistance in resettlement that grows naturally in immigrant neighborhoods and organizations should be fostered. This is an area where much remains to be learned; research on immigrant identity and effective service provisions is sorely needed.

Appendix

COMMENTS OF TASK FORCE MEMBERS

Msgr. Nicholas DiMarzio
U.S. Catholic Conference

The American Jewish Committee is to be congratulated for taking the courageous step of trying to focus dispassionately on a number of key points surrounding the immigration issue. The area of services to immigrants is a particular concern to me. In the hyperbole which has come to define much of the debate on the impacts of immigrants -- and especially undocumented aliens and refugees -- on this nation's public-service infrastructure, one often forgets that most localities have shown a capacity to address the challenge rationally and, apparently, often effectively. A number of cities have activist mayors who have issued directives ordering city agencies to provide services in an immigration-status-blind manner. This is a gesture full of symbolism -- and one reinforced by policies of noncooperation with the INS. Passive symbolism can easily regress into empty gestures, however, unless specific initiatives are developed and implemented. By and large, public service providers show only occasional commitment to understanding the special needs of immigrants or to responding to the very real challenges posed by large influxes of newcomers.

In this era of the new federalism -- with its emphasis on less government and more self-reliance and an accompanying shrinkage in the availability of federal dollars -- scarce funds must be allocated to the neediest. Although some of the foreign-born are at times among the neediest, they may be programmatically ineligible to receive assistance. Competition for scarce resources by groups that differ by immigrant status, race, or ethnicity can lead to conflict and reinforce unwanted "us versus them" images. And the issue of long-term dependency on public assistance by refugee populations in highly impacted areas certainly sharpens the potential for increasing antipathies and conflict.

There are two areas -- health and education -- where most newcomers can count on being able to continue to have access to services. In other areas, such as language instruction for adults, public services are woefully inadequate. While some of the burden for this and other services is absorbed by private service delivery agencies, scarcity in

private funding and programmatic restrictions governing access to services offered by agencies receiving public funds means that many of those who need to be reached and assisted will not be. Recognizing that we may indeed be in an era of limits, we must not lose sight of the fact that withholding essential services to the needy is a particularly shortsighted approach to reducing a society's budget deficits.

Siobhan Oppenheimer-Nicolau
Hispanic Policy Development Project

We are a very young nation and, with the exception of Native Americans, we are all immigrants from some place else. We have chosen and we have been permitted -- indeed encouraged -- to become Americans. The use of hyphens notwithstanding (Italian-American, Swedish-American, Chinese-American, Mexican-American, et al.), Americans have a strong sense of themselves as a distinct and new breed that is continuously being brewed in a mythical melting pot.

The French do not dwell upon the definition of a Frenchman. In old and venerable cultures, people are what they are born. The French are French, under the monarchy, under the empire, under the republic; the French are French even when they no longer live in France or speak French and, of course, nobody can ever become French. A non-French person can reside in France, can perhaps obtain French citizenship, but for generations the family will continue to be viewed as the British or Italians or Greeks who live at the end of the lane.

For Americans, identity is not so simple. Amid rampant and ongoing cultural diversity the melting-pot society feels an urgent need o define itself. Absent cultural and historical homogeneity, we have to consciously consider what makes an American. What is the common core?

The common core is ideological and linguistic. Americans believe in democracy, capitalism, freedom, rule of the majority, protection of the minority and -- Americans speak English.

Because English is a key element in the very short list of characteristics which constitutes the essence of "Americanism," language issues are highly charged and sensitive. Because English plays a central role in making the American, many citizens believe that the new immigrants must abandon their languages in all haste. Some consider the willingness to shed the old language as a kind of test of national loyalty. Monolingual English-speaking is deemed a virtue while maintenance of a native language is often viewed as a threat to the American way and a barrier to assimilation. It's acceptable and jolly to celebrate ethnic roots in parades, festivals, and cuisine as long as words on the signs and flags and menus are written in English.

In most cases, the level of public concern about any particular

immigrant language group is directly related to the size of the population. Nobody worries much about Greeks speaking Greek, but there is considerable agitation about Hispanics speaking Spanish. At the same time, society does not deeply oppose the study of what we call foreign languages. In general we teach them poorly and consider language facility to be a charming skill akin to violin playing or dancing on ice skates. However, we can study as many languages as we desire so long as we rid ourselves of the languages associated with our personal immigrant pasts.

Every generation of assimilated Americans harbors the recurring impression that the latest immigrants are reluctant to learn English or acknowledge the central place it holds in our economy, in our social and political system, and in education. The public voices deep concern and the pressures on immigrants to speak English have been consistent and strong over the decades. Yet wave after wave of immigrants have followed the same pattern of language assimilation and usage. Mom and Dad immigrate, learn English as best they can, continue to speak their first language in the home while they urge their children to learn English. The children become English-dominant but have facility in their parents' language. Their children are monolingual English speakers with a sketchy handle on Grandma's and Grandpa's language.

The belief that the new immigrants do not want to learn English is unwarranted and unfounded. English is recognized as the primary language of the nation. English is neither threatened nor scorned. What many new immigrant parents do object to, however, are instructional approaches to learning English that deprive their children of the native language, which is often the language of communication in their families. Parents fear that they will not be able to guide their youth and pass on their family values.

Today there is another compelling reason to preserve immigrant language proficiency. In a world shrunk by supersonic flight and instant satellite communication, the biliterate individual is a vital resource. Increasingly business recognizes that it needs language resources to maintain its competitive edge. Increasingly the diplomatic and intelligence sectors express concern that lack of language skills is an obstacle to the successful performance of their missions. Increasingly immigrant parents are becoming aware that their children can get better jobs if they can read and write in more than one language.

Unquestionably, the English language is central to American identity and American life. For other reasons, the native languages of our newly arrived citizens are important to the present and future economic position and international stature of this country and to the family life of the recently arrived immigrants. The difference is one of priority; the learning of English is imperative, while the preservation and development of native languages is highly desirable both for the immigrants and for the nation.

Demetrios G. Papademetriou
Population Associates International

The American Jewish Committee has made an important contribution to clarifying some of the key topics surrounding the immigration issue. While many of the views reflected in the report parallel my own concerns, there are three instances where I feel that additional comments are necessary.

First, the recommendation that job training and placement programs should not be segregated from those for the general population is a double-edged sword. While the principle of not making distinctions among different groups is well taken, nevertheless, immigrants do have specialized needs, and sensitivity to these needs will make for more effective training and placement programs.

Second, on the question of whether all foreign-born newcomers should have access to the same redress mechanisms against employment discrimination as U.S.-born minorities, the report confuses an important issue of law and conscience. The casual nature of the report's reference to "affirmative action" is problematic. Affirmative action, as conventionally understood, is principally intended to redress often-long-standing instances of discrimination directed at specific groups. The question whether newcomers, while properly able to avail themselves of the antidiscrimination provisions of Title VII of the 1964 Civil Rights Act, should also be able to access the affirmative-action mechanism because of their race or ethnicity is one which the report does not really address. By casually mentioning the opposing views on this matter without discussing the implications of each perspective, the report fails to make the contribution it could to debate on this issue.

Last to be considered is the suggestion that the mere eligibility to vote, a principal "benefit" of citizenship, puts newcomers on an "equal civic and political footing with other Americans." This perspective papers over the gradual process through which political equality is obtained. Political power has more to do with access to and ability to manipulate a wide variety of resources than it does with the mere state of voter eligibility.

Samuel Rabinove
American Jewish Committee

Having reviewed this draft report, my feeling is it is so fine that I am reluctant to raise any questions about it. Yet there was one point that did give me pause. Specifically, on page 11 the report says: "Proponents argue that newcomers should receive no less protection against discrimination than anyone else; if they are wronged, they should enjoy the same affirmative-action redress as other aggrieved groups." This is not quite accurate. Advocates of affirmative action

for immigrants indeed are seeking such redress, but not for all immigrants, rather for immigrants of color only, i.e., Blacks, Latinos, and Asians. In other words, in their view, affirmative action should be used to help immigrants from Jamaica, Colombia, and Hong Kong, but not those from Italy, Greece, or Poland. Isn't this racially discriminatory? You bet it is.

Clearly, if any immigrant experiences employment or educational discrimination, he or she should be entitled to "rightful place" or "make whole" relief. It is quite another matter, however, to urge that affirmative-action redress be extended to all immigrants who are not white, and to these alone. Affirmative-action remedies, as a practical matter, often amount to a measure of preferential treatment for members of particular groups. While such remedies may well be justifiable to rectify the consequences of historic racial-group discrimination against American citizens, there is no basis in justice for granting such special restitution to new immigrants, in effect favoring them over white Americans. As the report goes on to note, opponents of affirmative action for immigrants maintain that "they are entitled to equal opportunity but not to compensatory benefits." That is precisely as it should be.

Andre Van Chau
National Immigration and Refugee Forum

I wish first to congratulate the American Jewish Committee on the report on acculturation. It is a most faithful rendering of ideas expressed in our meetings on the subject. I wish to address only one question that is very important in my mind: the question of affirmative action as it applies to new immigrants.

In the last few years, affirmative action has experienced a downturn; its application has been increasingly restricted, and promoters of affirmative action have become less and less vocal. In such a context, it is most important for us to emphasize the need for affirmative action as it applies to all the minorities who have suffered from discrimination and unfair treatment and also to all new immigrants who are identified with ethnic groups which have been discriminated against. Affirmative action in my mind is not simply a strategy to redress inequalities and discrimination of the past, but also a strategy to prevent inequalities and discrimination in the present and the future.

New immigrants who are identified as Blacks, Hispanics, or Asians share the disadvantages of Blacks, Hispanics, and Asian Americans and therefore should be allowed to avail themselves of the advantages provided by affirmative action. To let new Americans so identified be deprived of affirmative action is to condemn them to be doubly victimized.

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE'S TASK FORCE ON THE ACCULTURATION OF IMMIGRANTS TO AMERICAN LIFE

Task Force members served as individuals; their institutional affiliations are listed for identification purposes only. While the analysis and recommendations in this report grew out of the Task Force's discussions, no individual member has responsibility for any particular recommendation.

George M. Szabad, American Jewish Committee, Chair

Robert Bach, Professor of Sociology, State University of New York at Binghamton

Marilyn Braveman, Director of Education, American Jewish Committee

Muzaffar Chishti, Director of Research, Local 23-25, ILGWU

Msgr. Nicholas Di Marzio, Executive Director, Migration and Refugee Services, U.S. Catholic Conference

Joseph Fitzpatrick, S.J., Professor Emeritus of Sociology, Fordham University

Susan Forbes, Senior Associate, Refugee Policy Group

J. Kent Friedman, Chair, Southwest Region, American Jewish Committee

Lawrence Fuchs, Meyer and Walter Jaffe Professor of American Civilization and Politics, Brandeis University

Dennis Gallagher, Executive Director, Refugee Policy Group

Joseph Giordano, Director, Center on Ethnicity, Behavior and Communications

Mark Handelman, Executive Vice President, New York Association for New Americans

Norman Hill, President, A. Philip Randolph Institute

Robert Juceam, Attorney, New York City

Charles Kamasaki, Director of Policy Analysis, National Council of La Raza

Abraham Karlikow, American Jewish Committee, New York

Le Xuan Khoa, President, Indochina Resource Action Center

Jacobo Kovadloff, Director of South American Affairs, American Jewish Committee

Irving M. Levine, Director of National Affairs, American Jewish Committee

Hermino Martinez, Director of Training, Institute for Urban and Minority Education, Teachers College

Christopher Mitchell, Director, Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, New York University

Nicholas Montalto, Executive Director, International Institute of New Jersey

Michael Myers, Washington Representative, Church World Service

Stephanie Newman, Consultant and former Director of Policy Research and Planning, Federation of Jewish Philanthropies of New York

Siobhan Oppenheimer-Nicolau, President, Hispanic Policy Development Project

Lori Orum, Senior Education Policy Analyst, National Council of La Raza

Demetrios Papademetriou, President, Population Associates International

Patricia Pessar, Professor, Center for Immigration Policy and Refugee Assistance, Georgetown University

Samuel Rabinove, Legal Director, American Jewish Committee

Peter Rose, Sophia Smith Professor of Sociology, Smith College

David Roth, Coordinator, Illinois Consultation on Ethnicity

Gary Rubin, Director, AJC Center on Immigration and Acculturation

Stuart J.D. Schwartzstein, Consultant, New York City

David Seeley, Author, Education Through Partnership

Rick Swartz, President, National Immigration and Refugee Forum

Lisa Ternullo, Professional Conciliation Specialist

Lydio Tomasi, Executive Director, Center for Migration Studies

Srinvasan Umapathy, Professor of Management, Babson College

Andre Van Chau, Director, Asian-Pacific Project, National Immigration and Refugee Forum

Jane Wallerstein, American Jewish Committee, New Jersey

Karl Zuckerman, Executive Vice President, Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society

THE AMERICAN JEWISH COMMITTEE
Institute of Human Relations
165 East 56 Street, New York, NY 10022

May 1987

Single copy $5.00
Quantity prices on request